

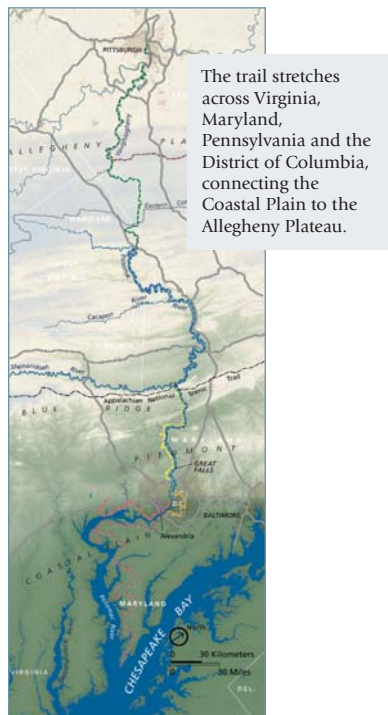
The Proposed Trail System

The trail corridor is one of the most historically significant regions in the United States, with over 40 units of the National Park System, five national recreation trails, and over 100 national historic landmarks. Authorized in 1983 as an amendment to the National Trails System Act of 1968, the trail is one of eight national scenic trails within the National Trails System. Within the commonwealth, the trail network includes:

- various foot and equestrian trails in northern Fairfax and eastern Loudoun counties;
- the Potomac Heritage Trail and Mount Vernon Trail in George Washington Memorial Parkway;
- partially planned/partially existing multiuse routes in southern Fairfax and Prince William counties (including within Prince William Forest Park);
- the Government Island Trail and planned Historic Falmouth-Ferry Farm Trail in Stafford County;
- the Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route Network in Northumberland, Westmoreland, Lancaster and Richmond counties.

POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL:

Experience the Corridor First Imagined by George Washington



GOALS

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is a partnership to develop a “braided” network of natural surface footpaths, on-road bicycling routes, multi-use facilities and water routes—for non-motorized outdoor recreation, education and transportation—between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Forks of the Ohio. Extensive coordination over the past 11 years among planners, trail “segment” managers and volunteers in Virginia (and other regions of the trail corridor) resulted in publication, in 2006, of the following goals:

- encourage resource conservation that contributes to the identity and well-being of communities in the trail corridor for present and future generations;
- establish a seamless trail network and set of experiences for trail users providing opportunities to learn about the significance of the natural, historical, and cultural resources in the trail corridor and the relationships among them;
- encourage public involvement and leadership in development and management of the trail and in conservation of the trail corridor;
- recognize planned and existing trail segments in all local comprehensive plans;
- foster opportunities for local business owners and managers to contribute to the trail experience and the sustainable use of associated resources; and
- coordinate management activities with other trail partners to accomplish trail corridor-wide management objectives.¹

Completion of the trail network will provide local residents of and visitors to the region with a rich tapestry of opportunities for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, boating, and cross-country skiing.

Legislative Authority: The National Trails System Act of 1968 included authorization to conduct a feasibility study for a “Potomac Heritage Trail,” subsequently completed and published by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in 1974. In 1983, an amendment to the Act recognized a corridor for development of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail based on the narrative and a generalized map in the feasibility study (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(11)(2000)).

POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL IN VIRGINIA	Trail Completed	Gaps	Corridor Length
NORTHERN VIRGINIA PLANNING DISTRICT (08)			
Loudoun County	14	29	43
Fairfax County	47.5	11.9	59.4
City of Alexandria	23	0	23
Prince William County	5.5	21.2	26.7
GEORGE WASHINGTON PLANNING DISTRICT (16)			
Stafford County	4	24	28
NORTHERN NECK PLANNING DISTRICT (17)			
Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route Network in Northumberland, Westmoreland, Lancaster and Richmond counties	91	5	96
TOTAL	185	91	276

The trail network through Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia, to date, includes 22 segments totaling 843 miles, with an additional 65 miles in various stages of planning.

PARTNERS

Trail partnerships are the foundation for connecting and interpreting the corridor's resources, linking current and future generations to the rich heritage of the Potomac and Upper Ohio basins. Coordination among staff of government agencies, non-profit organizations, business interests and individual volunteers is essential to realize the potential of the trail. Prominent partners include:

- Northern Neck Planning District Commission
- George Washington Regional Commission
- Northern Virginia Regional Commission
- county and city planning, park and transportation agencies in Northumberland, Westmoreland, Stafford, King George, Prince William, Fairfax, Loudoun, Lancaster and Richmond counties and in the City of Alexandria
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority
- BikeWalk Virginia, Inc.
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- local/regional organizations including the Potomac Heritage Trail Association, Fairfax Trails and Streams, Prince William County Trails and Streams, Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the Virginia Bicycling Federation
- land trusts operating in the trail corridor
- local and regional destination marketing organizations
- Virginia Tourism Corporation

In addition to the responsibilities of trail segment managers, volunteers play significant roles in planning, advocacy and maintenance, while the National Park Service is responsible for recognition of trail segments, coordination, technical assistance and managing use of the trail marker.

BENEFITS

Designation of local PHNST segments will increase recognition for public outdoor recreation opportunities; historical and cultural assets; and the positive economic and community benefits of low-impact, heritage tourism development; and environmental and natural resource conservation through development of transportation alternatives. Trail partners can expect:

- use of the designation to expand partnerships among a variety of groups, jurisdictions, agencies, and land managers seeking to develop non-motorized transportation and recreation options, develop outdoor educational opportunities and heritage tourism programs, and conserve landscapes;
- use of the trail marker (i.e., trail logo) in marketing, information, and education programs;
- consideration for funds to support trail-related projects and partners through the NPS Challenge Cost-Share Program; and
- technical assistance for corridor planning; project development and implementation; fund-raising; interpretive planning and educational program and project development; marketing and promotion; communications and public involvement; and heritage tourism projects.

Project Status – Accomplishments and Milestones

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is part vision and part reality. In Virginia, 230 miles of land trails and routes are recognized as part of the trail network. Among other criteria, each trail segment must provide the opportunity for at least one form of non-motorized travel.

The Virginia portion of the Potomac Heritage Scenic Trail is one of five long distance trail networks that serve as the foundation in developing a statewide Virginia Trail Plan. Long range, Virginia's plan will strive for a commonwealth traversed by a system of multi-purpose trails linking Virginia's communities, open spaces and natural landscapes.

¹ Northern Virginia Regional Commission, "A Development and Management Plan for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Virginia (Fairfax, Vir.: February 2006)